BUSI 296 – Business Communications
Spring 2014

Section 1: Tuesday/Thursday 8:00 AM-9:15 AM, Room 218 McNair Hall
Section 2: Tuesday/Thursday 9:25 AM-10:40 AM, Room 218 McNair Hall
Section 3: Tuesday/Thursday 10:50 AM-12:05 PM, Room 218 McNair Hall

Course Syllabus

	Section 1 and 2	Section 3
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Office Hours:	**By appointment and by chance**	**By appointment**

Course Binder and Reading Materials

On the first day of class, you will receive a binder with the course syllabus, copyrighted and public domain articles, and white papers on various communication topics. The charge for this material is $ 11.50 and is payable before class.

Please follow the link below and pay online. http://business.rice.edu/CommunicationsCourseBinder/

Please bring your receipt to class so we can provide you with your course binder on the first day.

Course Description

BUSI 296 introduces students to the key knowledge, skills, and practices required for successful personal and organizational communication in business. The course begins with an introduction to business, including the fundamentals of business organization, design, and management. The course then builds on this foundation by exploring how a business identifies and communicates with its key internal and external stakeholders. Students will learn and apply best practices in business communication, including developing a communications strategy, creating and delivering effective presentations, writing clear and concise business documents, managing meetings, and communicating across cultures.

Assignments include individual and team projects. For the latter, you will be assigned to a team, and your learning will include developing a project plan, assigning tasks, and managing the individual tasks to successful completion.

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will demonstrate

Understanding of key concepts, processes, and frameworks, including
- Business formation, organization, operation, and management
- Identifying and communicating with stakeholders
- Business communication vehicles and venues

Mastery of best practices in
- Business presentation, writing, and interpersonal communication
- Developing communication strategies and plans
- Creating and delivering effective internal and external communication vehicles

Methods of Learning

Since the course focuses on both knowledge and skills, class sessions will include lectures, discussions, group and individual exercises, and student presentations.

Outside of class, you will complete writing and presentation assignments, which we will review and discuss in class. We will record your class presentations, and you will receive instructor and peer feedback.

The basic structure of the course is Instruction/Application/Feedback. We will present communication best practices, frameworks, and models and then give you the opportunity to apply them and receive feedback. To measure your progress, you will complete a speaking assessment early in the term, and we will use this baseline to measure your progress and the effectiveness of the course.

Note: Some of the class sessions (lectures) will include all 50 students in the given section. However, for some more applied and practical exercises each section will be divided into four smaller groups. This syllabus explains which class sessions are run with the entire class present, and which class sessions are run in smaller groups.

Course Policies

Classroom Discussion: We will usually begin each class meeting by posing a question, based upon your reading, study questions, or the previous session's discussion. Frequently we will call upon a student to respond to the question rather than asking for a volunteer. We will then ask another student to elaborate or comment upon the previous remarks. We will often challenge your statements (even when we agree with you) or ask you to clarify your points. Please do not be discouraged by this sort of probing. We are not necessarily being critical of your ideas or analysis; rather we are attempting to deepen the discussion and to give you an opportunity to think on your feet and defend your ideas.

Classroom Etiquette: We expect to maintain a relaxed and professional learning environment in the classroom at all times. In particular, we expect you to listen closely and respectfully to your colleagues' comments. Whenever possible, we expect you to build upon or help to clarify their insights. There will be no side discussions or interruptions. **Close your laptops and turn off your cell phones during class.**

Written Assignments: During the course, you will complete two written assignments. In addition to clear thinking and expression, we expect your writing to be free from spelling, usage, and grammatical errors. Consider that anything you write for us is going to a senior executive or your best customer, someone who expects careful attention to detail and "zero defects." Your writing is part of your personal "brand," and it is a clear reflection of your communication competence.

Our Expectations: We will strive to make each class session a lively, intellectually engaging experience for all of you. You will contribute to this outcome by doing the following:

- **Attendance:** Attend every session. Beyond reviewing lecture slides and a colleague's notes, there's no way to make up an absence. If you cannot attend a class session, always notify your instructor before the class. If we are notified, we will consider legitimate reasons (e.g., sickness, scheduled athletic trip, job interview, etc.) as excused absences. However, please note, you will receive "**0" grade for your class participation** if you have **more than four (4) unexcused absences**. **If you miss more than six (6) unexcused classes, your final grade will be lowered by at least a full letter grade.**
- **Late Submissions:** Submit your work on time. Acceptance of late work is at the instructor's discretion. **We will lower the grade (at least half a grade point) of any late work.**
- **Makeup work:** All makeup work is at the instructor's discretion and needs to be completed within one week from the original deadline for a given assignment. **All assignments are reviewed and graded only once, unless instructor requests re-submission.**
- **Arrive on time:** late arrivals disrupt us and the rest of the class.
- **Prepare thoroughly:** expect to be the first student called on every class session, and be ready with thoughtful responses to the reading and study questions.
- **Participate in class:** in addition to the quality of your participation, we value your energy and enthusiasm for the discussions and activities.

The Rice Honor Code: Unless you are working on a team assignment, **you alone** are responsible for your work. If the assignment is a team assignment, the entire team is responsible. Each student and each team should place the Honor Code on all assignments. For team assignments, you only need to write the pledge one time, but all students must sign it.

Students With Disabilities: Speak with us during the first two weeks of class if you have a documented disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations**.** All discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities will also need to contact Disability Support Services in the Allen Center.

Cell Phone Classroom Policy: Jones School policy requires students to turn their cell phones off during class. A faculty member may relax this policy in some situations. For example, if a student talks with a faculty member prior to class and indicates the need to have his cell phone in "vibrate" position, then the faculty member may grant the student's request.

Laptop Classroom Policy: Jones School policy requires students to place their laptop computer in the closed position while class is in session. A faculty member may relax this policy in some situations, such as for note taking or accessing instructional materials.

Grading

We will use the following grading scale for your graded assignments:

A+ = 100-99	B+ = 89-88	C+ = 79-78	D = 69-60
A = 98-93	B = 87-83	C = 77-73	F = Below 60
A- = 92-90	B- = 82-80	C- = 72-70	R = Complete Redo

The Jones School policy requires that the overall course GPA should not exceed 3.5.
Participation rubric:

100	**95**	**85**	**75**	**0**
Exceptional and consistently insightful comments in class and exceptional participation in group activities	Regular and strong class contributions and effective participation in group activities	Occasional class comments and adequate participation in group activities	Little participation in class discussions and only occasional contributions to group activities	More than four unexcused absences; poor group participation

Assignment Summary

Due Date	Assignments	I/T*	Value
January 16	Impromptu presentations (scored but not graded)	I	NA
February 6	Team Presentation on Google case study (Content)	T	5%
February 6	Team Presentation on Google case study (Delivery)	I	10%
February 27	Persuasive Presentation (Content)	T	5%
February 27	Persuasive Presentation (Delivery)	I	10%
February 28	Writing Assignment #1: Prepare e-mail message	I	10%
March 25	CEO Crisis Roundtable Briefing (Content)	T	5%
March 25	CEO Crisis Roundtable Briefing (Delivery)	I	10%
Match 27	Writing Assignment #2 Prepare e-mail message	I	10%
April 17	Consulting Presentation (Content)	T	10%
April 17	Consulting Presentation (Delivery)	I	15%
On-going	Class participation: in-class exercises, in-class study questions and discussions, peer feedback	I	10%

* I/T = Individual or Team grade Value = % of final grade
Presentation – 70%; Writing – 20%; Class Participation – 10%

Sessions Plan and Schedule of Assignments

Tuesday, January 14 (All students in Room 218)
Topic: Introduction to Business Communications
- Introductions, course overview, learning objectives
- Expectations, requirements, and grading

Topic: What is Business?

Be prepared to discuss the following:
1. What is your conception of American business and business people in the 21st Century?
2. What words and images come to mind when you think of business and business people?
3. How have you developed this conception? Is it based upon personal experience, the anecdotal experience of others, current events, images of business and business people in books, television, and movies, or something else?

Thursday, January 16 (All students in 218, then divided into four groups)
Impromptu Presentations (scored but not graded)
- Delivery of 2-minute impromptu presentations

Tuesday, January 21 (All students in Room 218)
Topic: Elements of Business Management
- Creating a business
- Organizing key business functions
- Defining business purpose and design
- Identifying and analyzing stakeholders

Be prepared to discuss the following:
1. What is the main purpose of any business?
2. Who are business stakeholders?
3. Do you think business has social responsibilities? If yes, what are they? If not, why not?

Thursday, January 23 (All students in Room 218)
Topic: Google in China – case discussion

Required readings: (1)"Google, Inc., in China" case study in binder; (2)"Ten things Google has found to be true" in binder and at http://www.google.com/corporate/tenthings.html
Be prepared to discuss the following questions:
1. Whom does Google consider its most important stakeholder? What value does Google provide to this stakeholder?
2. What is Google's stated business mission? Was Google true to this mission in launching google.cn? Why or why not?
3. What responsibilities does a business have in dealing with a repressive foreign government?

Tuesday, January 28 (All students in Room 218)
Topic: Business Communication Strategy

Read: "Strategic Communication and Communication Strategy" article in the course binder.

Thursday, January 30 (All students in Room 218)
Topic: Business Presentation Best Practices

Read: "Powerful Presentations" and "Managing Q&A in Business Presentations" articles in the course binder.

Tuesday, February 4 (Teams working individually in breakout rooms)
Google Presentation working sessions

Thursday, February 6 (Students divided into four groups)
Google Presentation delivered

Graded assignment due during class:
Present on the "Google, Inc., in China" case study; assignment details on OWL-Space.

Tuesday, February 11 (All students in Room 218)
Topic: Business Writing/Emails

- Academic and business writing
- Email best practices
- Good, bad, and ugly emails

Read: "The Keys to Better Business Writing" article in the course binder.

Thursday, February 13 (All students in Room 218)
Topic: Executive Leadership and Ethics

- Jim Collins article discussion
- Issues in corporate leadership and ethics

Required Readings: Jim Collins, "The 10 Greatest CEOs of All Time" in binder and at http://www.jimcollins.com/article_topics/articles/10-greatest.html

Be prepared to discuss the following questions:

1. Who is Jim Collins? What qualifies him to write on executive leadership?
2. How does Collins begin his essay? Is this technique effective? Why or why not?
3. What specific criteria does Collins use to select his 10 greatest CEOs? How does he define his terms?
4. What other criteria do you consider important in assessing great leaders in any field?
5. Based on your answers to questions three and four, which of the 10 CEOs discussed by Collins do you consider the greatest leader? Why?
6. What leadership opportunities have you had? Do you have a leadership "style"? What leadership "styles" do you respond to positively and negatively?

Tuesday, February 18 (Students divided into four groups)
Topic: Executive Leadership and Ethics – small group activities

Required Readings
Robert Sutton, "Building the Civilized Workplace"- in binder
Jeffrey Pfeffer; Robert Sutton, "The Smart-Talk Trap" in BUSI 296 Electronic Course Pack

Thursday, February 20 (All students in Room 218)
(Section 3 guest lecturer – Rick Schell)
Topic: Influence and Persuasion

Be prepared to discuss the following:
1. When was the last time you tried to persuade someone to say, do, or believe something? How did you approach the situation? Were you successful? Why or why not?
2. Is there an approach or style of influence that you find effective?
3. Do you have a personal influence approach or style?

Tuesday, February 25 (Teams working individually in breakout rooms)
Persuasive Presentation working session

Thursday, February 27 (Students divided into four groups)
Persuasive Presentation delivered

Graded assignment due on Friday, February 22, 5 p.m.:
Writing Assignment #1: Prepare email message; assignment detail on OWL-Space.

March 4 and March 6 –Spring Break No Class

Tuesday, March 11 (All students in Room 218)
Topic: Marketing (Section 3 guest lecturer – Rick Schell)

Be prepared to discuss the following:
1. What companies do you consider to be leaders in marketing?
2. What about their marketing impresses you?

Thursday , March 13 (All students in Room 218)
Topic: Advertising (Guest Lecturer for all sections: David Tobin)

Be prepared to discuss the following:
1. Are you influenced by advertising? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?
2. How do ads reach you? Count up the various media.

Tuesday, March 18 (All students in Room 218)
Topic: Crisis Communications and Roundtable Presentations
- Crisis communication best practices
- Roundtable briefing team and topic assignment
- Roundtable briefings methods

Thursday, March 20 (Teams working individually in breakout rooms)
Topic: Roundtable working session

Tuesday, March 25 (Students divided into four groups)
Roundtable Briefings delivered

Graded assignment due during class: Roundtable Briefing for your CEO on current crisis; assignment details on OWL-Space.
Graded assignment due on Thursday, March 27, before class: **Writing Assignment #2:** Prepare email message; assignment detail on OWL-Space.

Thursday, March 27 (All students in Room 218)
(Section 1 and 2 guest lecturer – Morgan Grace)
Topic: Cross-cultural Communication

Be prepared to discuss the following:
1. When have you ever experienced cultural differences? Bring a few examples of your own cross-cultural experiences to class.
2. How does culture influence your own thinking and behavior?

Tuesday, April 1 (Students divided into four groups)
Topic: Cross-cultural Communication – small group activities

Thursday, April 3 – Midterm Recess No class

Tuesday, April 8 (All students in Room 218)
Topic: Gender and Generations
- "The Power of Talk": linguistic style

Required Reading: Read article "The Power of Talk" in BUSI 296 Electronic Course Pack
Be prepared to discuss the following:
(Gender – answer based on Tannen's article)
1. How does Tannen define "linguistic style"? According to Tannen, how do we develop our style?
2. What are some of the most important differences in the linguistic style between the genders? Why are these differences important in business communications?
3. What kind of linguistic style do you have? How did you develop it?
4. Are the generalizations on gender differences in Tannen's article valid today? Why or why not?

(Generations – answers not based on Tannen's article)
5. What are the key characteristics of your generation's attitude toward work, success, or business and life balance? Are these attitudes different than your parents' attitudes?

Thursday, April 10 (All students in Room 218)
Topic: Business Consulting and Consulting Presentations setup/review

Tuesday, April 15 (Teams working individually in breakout rooms)
Topic: Consulting Presentations working session

Thursday, April 17 (Students divided into four groups)
Consulting Presentations delivered

Graded assignment due during class:
Present Consulting Presentations; assignment details on OWL-Space.

Tuesday, April 22 (All students in Room 218)
(Section 1 and 2 guest lecturer – Morgan Grace)
Topic: Current Issues in Business Communications (a selection from the following topics)

- Listening skills
- Difficult conversations and giving feedback
- Meeting management
- Web 2.0 media in business

Thursday, April 24 (All students in Room 218)
Topic: Course recap and evaluations